

CITY OF NEWARK, NJ'S AFRICAN-AMERICAN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Interview with Franotie A. Washington -- March 17, 1999

Q: My name is E. Alma Flagg. I'm an interviewer for the African-American Oral History of the Krueger-Scott Mansion in Newark. Today is Wednesday, March 17, 1999. My guest today is Mrs. Franotie Auston Washington, who is a retired educator, but a very active person, in the City of Newark. Mrs. Washington, I'm so glad to have you today, and I appreciate your coming to share your life experience with us.

Washington: I'm very happy to be here. And, of course, you put me under your wings many, many years. So it's more than a pleasure to be here to share my life with you.

Q: Thank you. Now, I'm going to begin by asking you to give your full name and date and place of birth.

Washington: Well, my full name is Franotie, F R A N O T I E, Luch Auston. That's how I was born.

Q: Right.

Washington: My name is a combination. Franotie is derived from my two grandmothers.

Q: Is that so?

Washington: Francis. Yes. And Mamie Otie. Francis was my mother's --

Q: Given name?

Washington: Given name. And Mamie Otie was my father's mother's given name.

Q: Isn't that interesting?

Washington: And so I was the first grandchild and so they combined it.

Q: And made a truly unusual name.

Washington: Was born on Friday, August 29th, 1941 at 8:18 a.m. at Columbus Hospital here in Newark.

Q: How very interesting. I'm familiar with Columbus Hospital.

Washington: My mother's name Alpha Mary Lee. That was her maiden name. My father, John H. Harrison Auston. And, of course, Mr. and Mrs. John H. Auston. Don't you want to know my doctor's name? He lives right here in Newark. [Laughter]

Q: If you feel like telling.

Washington: Oh, he became a family friend. He was here on West Market. Joseph Marshall and I was one of his, his third child he brought into the world.

Q: Isn't that interesting.

Washington: He became my doctor later in life prior to his passing. You know, how you go away and you come back together. My first visit to him, the doctor, lasted almost two hours cause all we did was reminisce.

Q: Is that true?

Washington: While the patients waited outside. You know, but anyway.

Q: Guess he didn't rush you.

Washington: No. He didn't rush me. No. He did not rush me at all. Raised in north Newark on Peabody Place. And very fortunate. My mother, Alpha Leach Auston then, of course, was the first African-American woman to be a parole officer in the State of New Jersey.

Q: Ah hah. So you have a trail of people.

Washington: She graduated from Fisk before she was twenty-one. She was what they call an early entrance student. She was born in Georgia. The family moved to Asbury Park where she was a writer. She graduated from Asbury High School, either fifteen or sixteen. Received numerous awards and acknowledgements. And she entered Fisk, and when she finished, she came back to New Jersey. She wanted to be a parole officer, and that's what she did. She was the first black woman in the state. And she met my father because she moved in with my aunt, Geneva Auston at that time.

Q: I see.

Washington: My father's sister. And they were roommates for five years. And that's how she met my father.

Q: Very interesting.

Washington: And my father was very active in the jazz, on the jazz scene here in the City of Newark. He played the trumpet at the various clubs. And, as you know, Newark was a booming jazz.

Q: Indeed, yes.



Washington: Place.

Q: Would you take us back to your father's origins.

Washington: All right. My father was born in Warrington, North Carolina. And then he moved to New Jersey, into Newark. And we had a restaurant. He worked for Continental Can Company. The Newark Public Library prior to his retirement.

Q: I see.

Washington: And his mother, my father's mother and father, were educators. His mother was principal of a school in North Carolina. His father was a printer, an educator, and had a farm. But they didn't do that much farming.

Q: I see.

Washington: You know, but they do, we still have the property of course. But, let me go to my mother's family as well. My mother's father and her mother were educators. Her father was president of Selby Institute in Brunswick, Georgia. And that's a lot of history there. That's going back to the early 1900s, 1909. They called him a principal, but he was a president in today's language. But he was a principal of the school. They founded it, Carrie Bean and Sallie Long, Philadelphia, a white woman who had some money.

Q: Yes.

Washington: Founded the Selby Institute in Brunswick, Georgia.

Q: So it was a private institution?

Washington: It was a, it was like a junior college. I guess similar to Essex County College. And the property is still there. They still celebrate it. I have returned to Brunswick to celebrate the school, what is, every four years they celebrate and recognize Selby Institute. My grandfather went to Morehouse and then he received his doctorate at Howard University. My grandmother met my grandmother. I'm talking about my mother's side of the family.

Q: Your mother's.

Washington: Met him at Howard University. And then she taught English at Selby Institute. But let me return to Newark now. I was very blessed to have very supportive parents. We lived on Peabody Place, North Newark, off of Chestnut Avenue which is off of Broadway. It was a very integrated neighborhood. Very much so. And I might mention that a lot of prominent people came from that street and very proud of that.

Q: I see. People who had their upbringing there?

Washington: Upbringing there, like Donald Payne, Leon Payne, Reverend Hogard. We had the Brantleys, Mrs. Brantley, who had a beauty parlor there, but was well known in the City of Newark. We had Lucy Augustus, an educator, who eventually became a millionaire from her purchase of the oil stocks in the mid-west, and Chico Mendoza, which was a latin band. And they played at the Waldorf Astoria and many of the noted nightclubs at that time. We also had Andy and the Bay Sisters. They came off of Chester Avenue. And they are known around the world. Andy Bay is known for his special rendition of Trees, and his sisters are known for their voice. Some of the sisters live in Canada. You have the Coppitts, music educators, instructors. And I think Mrs. Coppitt, the mother or all the children, I think she taught just about everyone in Newark music at some point in time. If you were, if you had studied voice, if you had somewhere you had been taught by Mrs. Coppitt. And then you had the Hogards. You had Reverend Hogard and his family of educators. You have Reverend Clinton Hogard now.



Q: Bishop.

Washington: Bishop. Excuse me. Bishop. When I said it was integrated, we had Mr. People who lived across the street from us who was a graduate of the Newark College of Engineering. And he had his own business behind his home. We did not realize how renowned this gentleman was until we were in high school and there were clippings about him in the newspaper.

Q: What was his specialty?

Washington: He would develop parts. He would design and develop parts for machines. And people from all over the world, we'd know that that there were trucks certain times of the day picking up equipment, but we had not idea that Mr. People was so renowned.

Q: Would you say, he must have had a machine shop?

Washington: He had a machine shop and he had workers with him, and you never heard him. So you didn't even know it was there. It was like a big garage he had behind his home. Just in the garage so, you know, we never paid any attention.

Q: I see.

Washington: But the children growing up, my father had his own beauty supply business, Valco, which was, he made the products actually in the basement of the home. Hair grower, lanolin, like a tar. He had five men who worked for him, and he would actually make the grease, jar it, label it and sell it. And the formula was my mother's mother's formula. And my father also worked for Continental Can Company as I indicated before, and then he worked at the library.

Q: An interesting and varied history. Did you mention a restaurant?

Washington: A restaurant. He worked in a restaurant. I think he was in the Central Ward somewhere for a while.

Q: I see. What was the name of the restaurant?

Washington: You know, I don't know. He didn't work in it that long.

Q: Oh, he wasn't at that very long.

Washington: No. But he was an excellent cook. He did most of the cooking.

Q: I see.

Washington: And my mother's father, he stepfather, was a chef, but he also had his own TV show in Chicago. It was like a fifteen minute show.

Q: When would this have been?

Washington: Early 1950. I was a small child. My grandmother, my mother's mother, was a supervisor out at the Totowa Training Center.

Q: Oh yes.

Washington: For children who had special needs. They had the big heads.

Q: I see.

Washington: You also had people there who were, individuals with special needs, with low IQs. In the 50s or 40s. And she was supervisor in one of the houses, and planned their training for



them.

Q: So that was Totowa. The school there was a residential.

Washington: Yes. A residential school, Totowa Training Center in Totowa, New Jersey.

Q: This is very interesting. Well, let's come back to the city where you're growing up and you're telling us so many interesting things. And tell us about your own schooling here in the city.

Washington: Well, I attended grades, well not grades, kindergarten through grade five, Summer Place. It was a small, little red schoolhouse with a playground. Ideal. Our dog used to walk me to school every day and wait for me. Well, he would know what time I was going to return and he would be there waiting for me. Sally Carol was the school crossing guard on Broadway and Chester Avenue.

Q: Imagine that. She is another person whom you saw go through heights.

Washington: Yes. Then grades six, seven and eight I attended Elliott Street School. The principal at that time was a Mr. Hargrove, and I received the DAR Medal. And I did not know the history. I didn't understand what was the, there was a lot of discussion whether or not I was going to get it., My eighth grade teacher, Mr. Wilkes, Edward Wilkes, I'll never forget him, told me when I was teaching how he had to fight for me to get the award. But I did receive the DAR Medal. And then, of course, I understand the history behind it.

Q: Now.

Washington: Now. So never before, but he did fight to make sure that I got it. And when I left Elliott Street School, I was also chief of girls patrol at Elliott Street School.



Q: A little law.

Washington: A little law --

Q: Keeping experience.

Washington: Making sure everyone was on their post in the morning and at lunch time, and, of course, at the end of the school day. When I left Elliott Street School, I attended Webster for a half a year. Broadway Junior High School opened up in the mid-year, in February of 55. And the students that lived in that district were then directed to attend that school.

Q: I see. So it changed at that time.

Washington: Right. It was only a half a year, but I did receive numerous awards, math awards and several art awards and several other awards. Also in the eighth grade I made the Art Award. So right along I received recognition for whatever activities I was involved in at the time.

Q: And art was your thing way back.

Washington: Art was always my, way back, way back. And when I left, we graduated from Broadway Junior High School. We were the first class. In fact, the school wasn't ready, but.

Q: That used to happen.

Washington: But somehow or another we managed. Then I attended Barringer High School from grades ten, eleven and twelve. All my life, living on Peabody Place, because it was integrated with Catholics, with Jews, and blacks. We all visited each other's home. We all played in the streets together. Although I knew there were differences, as they did, within our own environment which we have called the utopia, members of my family, we were kind of sheltered. The reality set in

when I went to Barringer High School.

Q: Oh, what reality was that?

Washington: That there was a lot of racism.

Q: How did it show itself at Barringer?

Washington: It showed itself in the beginning. I think the young man of Barringer experienced it more. Incoming freshmen, incoming sophomores from the junior high school, they were, they had like an initiation of some sort. It really hit at home during the winter season. The students at Barringer, the white students, were transported on buses from Forest Hills section. The black students from Broadway and below or Lincoln Avenue over that way, we took a bus and then we walked up Park Avenue to attend Barringer High School. There was no transportation provided for us.

Q: You took a public bus.

Washington: Public bus. During the winter season of course, well, not even during the winter season, the blacks entered Barringer High School from one side. The whites because they were on the bus entered from the front of the building because they were dropped off there. There was never any problem except that we noticed that we didn't have a bus. That no one seemed to provide a bus for us. Whether it was intentional or not, I'll never know. I just know that there was no bus. We had to pay public transportation. No hatred behind that.

Q: That was a school bus?

Washington: That was a regular school bus that they had provided. Or the school made arrangements with transportation just for those students.



Q: Sounds very strange. I never heard of anything like that. The bus. Now I have heard of, you know, racist happenings around the school, but actual provision of a bus. Is it possible the parents set that up?

Washington: No. I think it was arranged by the district to pick up all the students in Forest Hills. And don't forget you're talking about the 50s. Anything is possible. I noticed that the black students entered, majority of the blacks entered the school from one street and the whites all entered from the front of the school.

Q: Because of the way they were, where they were coming from.

Washington: That's correct.

Q: Well, did you ever hear anything on the inside about there being particular corridors?

Washington: No. We didn't have that kind. It was just, it was subtle. Yet, it was there. And then, of course, there were things that were not subtle. For instance, at the end of my sophomore year, there used to be the pints and the quart cartons of milk. And the white students all came from nowhere in front of the school on to the lawn where we happened to have lunch, and bombarded us with cartons of milk. For no reason whatsoever.

Q: With the milk.

Washington: With the milk cartons. With milk in them.

Q: That's something I certainly never heard.

Washington: That was in my, end of my sophomore year. Because that's when you had the half day school closing, last few days of school. And I'll never forget it because I had never

experienced anything like it. And what you must realize is that many of the students, I had attended schools from kindergarten through grade nine, and all of a sudden you're in your own environment. And whether they were participants or not, active participants, they were there, and, you know, our eyes connected. Because I said, after all these years, why are you doing this? They weren't directing it at me, but when I viewed some of the people, the whites that were participating in this fiasco, in this, it wasn't cute at all, so it was meant to tell, to send a message to colored people then --

Q: Yes.

Washington: -- and blacks, depending on the terminology, that we don't want to be bothered with you.

Q: So that what you are saying is the young people with whom you grew up and had a warm neighborhood experience were on another side once you arrived at the senior high school.

Washington: I don't want to say another side. They were with their own people in a group.

Q: They were with color mates and you were with color mates.

Washington: That's right.

Q: And the both took sort of ne'er the twain shall meet or certainly not mingle in any faction, is that what you're saying?

Washington: That's correct. However, when you returned to school in the fall, when we, when I returned to school in the fall my junior year it was like nothing had ever happened. Very strange. But because I had had that experience at the end of the my sophomore year, then of course, there were rumblings in the south, there were a lot of, we had a television and, of course, everyone was



looking at TV and we saw what was happening to blacks in the south. We were just an extension of that, but not on the same scale. We didn't have dogs biting us. We didn't have hoses on us.

Q: But you had to be aware.

Washington: You had to be aware. You had to be aware. And fortunately I was in a family that they always told us to judge the, judge an individual by their deeds and not by the color of their skin. However, you are what you are. Always be conscious of that fact. But you can be anything you want to be. It's up to you. Very strong convictions from my parents.

Q: What was the educational experience like in the school?

Washington: In the school it was fine. The teachers were very good. They were very supportive. Never had a problem with the teachers. Of course, I'm sure there were some racist teachers. I merely didn't experience it. But the students were the ones you had to be, and when I say students, I'm going to be very blunt. You had some very rough Italians. And many of the Italians who were nasty towards African-Americans, blacks, coloreds at that time, were not even seen at the school. They were outsiders who would come around the building and cause problems that were unnecessary. Where we had to have police protection to leave the building at the end of a school day.

Q: How often?

Washington: Often enough that parents had to deal with it. As far as I'm concerned, one time is too many. But there was more than one occasion during my years there.

Q: These outsiders would come and create the trouble.

Washington: Right. But you also had students inside the building who were trouble makers too.

And I guess their academics weren't up to par so they found another means to vent their, you know, their educational endeavors.

Q: Possibly they were friends of the outsiders.

Washington: Yes. Correct. But these things didn't happen often. I'm not saying they were daily events, monthly events, but when they did occur, they were ugly. You might have occasion to have, during the winter time, when the snow was on the ground. It was almost impossible sometimes to get out of the door because they were throwing snowballs at you. Just hateful, spiteful. And then you had to find a different route to go home. Instead of going down Park Avenue to Broadway to take the bus home, you might have to go down Seventh Avenue. You had to go out of your way to avoid problems.

Q: What year did you finish Barringer?

Washington: I finished Barringer in 1955. 59, 59. Yet, my experiences there personally were not bad. I had excellent teachers. Guidance. Got a lot of support.

Q: What was the guidance like towards your future?

Washington: Oh, towards my future, it was excellent.

Q: From the staff.

Washington: Yeah. From the staff. To make sure I got in, I took the right courses. I knew I was going to college. There was no doubt about it. I had a choice of going to Howard or to Fisk. Howard because my grandparents, my mother's parents, had graduated from Howard. And Fisk because my mother graduated from Fisk. So just a matter of where are you going. So because the staff, the guidance department, knew I was bound, college bound, you got more attention.



Q: I see.

Washington: You know, once they knew your parents were involved, of course, they're going to take an interest in you. Mr. Astaino, Patrick Astaino, was my guidance councilor. Later to become my principal when I was a teacher, but he certainly was very supportive of me, very supportive. And I was blessed and fortunate to go to Fisk University following in my mother's footsteps.

Q: Very outstanding institution.

Washington: Yes. And when I graduated from Barringer, again I received several awards. Was in the top quarter of the class. So I was very pleased and very happy.

Q: I see. What were some of the awards?

Washington: I received the Art Award again. You know, I'm sorry I didn't bring them with me.

Q: I see. You'll think of some things. Perhaps as we go along, you'll want to speak about something that you have with you. Back to the family if we may. Tell us about the religious background or involvement of your family.

Washington: We're sitting at your home today.

Q: Excuse me.

Washington: We're sitting in your home, Dr. Flagg. More than appropriate I was a member of Thirteenth Avenue Presbyterian Church.

Q: That's a little remnant out there.

Washington: A little remnant out there, and I noticed it this morning. So we were members of the Presbyterian faith.

Q: It was quite a thing that the Landmarks Committee went through to get that section of the building left.

Washington: I remember.

Q: We were hoping to get much more than that left for historic reasons. But that was preserved.

Washington: As you know, Thirteenth Avenue was a very active church.

Q: Oh yes.

Washington: Big congregation. Civic minded. And it's unfortunate that that's all that's left of it. But at least there's a reminder. When I was parking my car this morning, I looked and said, oh, I remember the article in the papers that went into detail about how you were, the committee, the Landmark Committee was able to save just that portion.

Q: They had a ceremony for that. It was a cold, snowy day when that was dedicated as a landmark to be preserved.

Washington: As you know, there were very active churches in the City of Newark. I don't think the churches then also made sure that they had activities to keep the young people involved in the church. Because there were several churches, Clinton Memorial Church was close to our home. Many times I would go that church.

Q: Yes. It's on Broadway.



Washington: It's on Broadway. And it was easy to get to. But they also, they had the youth choir, which I even joined. They also had activities, like on Friday night, for the youth. Something to keep them involved and motivated to come to church so that they didn't lose, that they were building, and starting with the youth for the foundation for the church. Many of our churches, as you know, in Newark today are not occupied. Do not have large congregations. They haven't reached out to the youth.

Q: You wonder about their programs.

Washington: That's correct. For the youths.

Q: Cause you are remembering things that were done, and the fact that probably your church leaders were active in affairs in the community.

Washington: That's correct.

Q: From the church viewpoint.

Washington: That's correct.

END SIDE ONE, TAPE ONE; BEGIN SIDE TWO, TAPE ONE

Q: Continuing the interview March 17, 1999. And I am continuing the interview with Mrs. Franotie Washington. We were just talking about the churches, and I think we had about completed that. And I'm interested now in what kind of entertainment and recreation as a young person growing up in the city. What was available?

Washington: Well, there were many things available. Let me just, we kind of created our own recreation.

Q: Is that true?

Washington: Behind our home we had a vacant lot. First there were trees there, but the trees were taken down. It was like a little park. The trees were taken down. They thought they were going to build homes there, but it never happened. So it became our playing ground. What we did was, the older gentlemen, teenagers, young people, we all got together. We cleaned the entire lot. Rakes at that time, hands, picked up whatever glass. Of course, we found Indian Heads and old coins, but anyway, it was an Indian area. We cleaned that. We cleaned the street. The recreation at that time was inventive, creative. Played baseball, we played tennis, we played stick ball. Instead of playing with the base pads, we played stick ball. We played scully, played tops.

Q: What's that?

Washington: Shooting tops. You make a scoreboard. It was a board you make on the street. And you shoot the tops. And you have to make the board so that you don't interfere with the traffic. And, of course, we were a neighborhood so everyone was conscious of the fact that children were playing. So no one was flying through the streets.

Q: I see.

Washington: We'd play red light, jump rope, hopscotch. We would build scooters. Take a crate, like an apple crate, and put boards with skates underneath, and paint em, nail em together, of course.

Q: Sounds like a pushmobile.

Washington: Yeah. And we'd have our own little scooter races. But, you know, we did a lot. We did have a Boys Club on Broadway in North Newark, but it came later. We could go to the school.



Q: Elliott Street?

Washington: Yes.

Q: What was there? What could you do there?

Washington: After school recreation or Friday, excuse me, Friday night recreation. After school we had roller skating. Each day was a different planned activity that the gym department would plan. Roller skating maybe two days a week. They had a dance, a canteen they called it. On Fridays, we'd go to the canteen. Then they would have sports activities for students to get involved in. So there was something there for everyone. But in the immediate neighborhood, there were activities that kept up occupied. Right there. I don't see the students, of course, they have the computers today. But they're not creative. They're not imaginative.

Q: Oh.

Washington: All right. And that bothers me. That they're not active with their hands in creating something that comes from them. All right. I don't even see our students as active as we were with playing marbles. Stick ball, baseball, jump rope. We were always busy. We were always active. And yet we were still in our own home environment, our own neighborhood.

Q: In the neighborhood.

Washington: In the neighborhood. We were always busy. And I'd just like to see some of that come back. I'm realistic in that we were able to go outside and play. My sister, my brothers, my cousins. Because everyone in the neighborhood was your parent. If Mrs. Baldwin or Mrs. Williams said stop, you stopped. There was no talking back. There was a lot of respect. Everyone would watch out for you. If your parents hadn't gotten home from work yet or not, there was no problem. If you had a bruise, you'd run into anyone's house and have them look at it. You can't

do that today. The kids can't even play outside today.

Q: Right. You were expected to play in the streets.

Washington: We were expected.

Q: That was a neighborhood.

Washington: That was a neighborhood. And we tried to find the most, the area that would have the least traffic in order to do things. But I think of all the games we played, and things we would do like selling Kool-Aid, and people would just buy it from you. And setting up your little clubs in the neighborhood. Sitting on the steps at night just talking to each other. But you were in the neighborhood. Everyone knew everyone else. There was continuity, there was longevity. And because the people, whether they rented or owned, whether they rented the first floor of someone's home or whether you owned a home, the street was clean. Everyone was sweeping. Homes were kept up. There was pride. Because it was yours. It was yours. I'd like to see some of that pride come back. Those things I miss.

Q: Well, we see a lot of construction going on today of town houses, scattered throughout the city, that may bring back some of the features.

Washington: Well, you know what I'm happy is that they're not building the high rises anymore.

Q: No. The high rises are being replaced with town houses, actually.

Washington: When I drive around the city, from the East Ward to the South Ward to the West Ward to the Central Ward, North Ward of course, the, I see the lovely town houses that are going up. I think I might add the section that you live in is one of the best looking that I've seen in the city.



Q: I'm hoping that somebody will invest some more, what shall I say, in developments similar to this development in other parts of the city.

Washington: It would be. It would be. Because it looks like a family unit. Some of them do not. But I'm happy to see that they're building smaller units.

Q: Yes. Where the Housing Authority is replacing the high rises, they're putting families into individual homes.

Washington: That's correct. And hopefully.

Q: They look good.

Washington: I want to say what has happened because the Housing Authority has put them into units, family units, they seem to take pride in their home. I just want to clean up the streets more. You know, it's, and I know I'm going off a little bit. But I travel around the United States and outside the United States, and the worst entry, exit to an airport is right here in Newark. When I'm returning from a trip and I have to come over that ramp into Newark, it is so devastating. It's deplorable. There's no reason in the world why a city like Newark would allow from the airport.

Q: The approaches.

Washington: The approaches. And then to go down Broad Street and then to go on Orange Street. I said what is this? Newark didn't look like this when I was growing up. When I have visitors from out of state, I make it a point of going around certain areas to avoid showing them what our city should not look like.

Q: I see.

Washington: There's no excuse for it. None. None.

Q: Well, I hope we're on the road to changing that.

Washington: I hope so. That's why I'm staying here to be a part of that change.

Q: You want to see it.

Washington: I want to see it. I've seen a lot and I want to see more recreation in Newark.

Q: Speaking of recreation, in the area of theater and music and dance and that sort of thing, what was available that you?

Washington: Newark Museum. Going to Newark Museum, walking there all the time. But I didn't take, I took dance classes at dance studio on Halsey Street. And I went with my sister and all. My brother was on TV dancing.

Q: That was a group from the school?

Washington: From the school which was integrated. And my mother had us take dance lessons, tap and ballet. Not to become professional, but for body balance.

Q: Self-development.

Washington: Right, self-esteem and all like that. So you could see our little outfits.

Q: You really had something there.

Washington: Oh yeah. So we took dancing. We went once or twice a week depending on what



we were doing.

Q: I see. You really were getting a background.

Washington: Oh yes. And then I wanted to take, I never took piano, but I wanted to take it. But I forgot what happened. Yeah, we took dancing. We liked it. We enjoyed it.

Q: Very varied and interesting history.

Washington: Recital and everything. In addition to Elliott Street having some recreational programs, when Broadway Junior High School opened, they also had recreation programs in the city during after school and during summer months. And in fact, one of the instructors for many years was a former Globe Trotter. He was a, Tony Wilson. Mr. Wilson. We knew him from the TV programs at the time, maybe a couple of movies. He was the instructor at the Broadway Junior High School recreational program. But they had dancing, they had class that students could take part in activities during the summer.

Q: Did you ever have the opportunity to go to anything of entertainment nature at the Newark School Stadium?

Washington: I guess we went to football games and there were some bands, competitions I believe. And, of course, the fireworks whenever they were held.

Q: I see.

Washington: As a student at Barringer, of course, I was there quite often for the football games.

Q: I was wondering about the Griffith Foundation for instance. That doesn't ring any bells for you?

Washington: No. I know about the Griffith Building downtown, and the courses and they had a theater. And we would go to concerts there, recitals usually.

Q: At the building?

Washington: At the building.

Q: But I seem to recall summer concerts at the stadium by the Griffith Foundation. I was wondering if you ever partook of anything like that.

Washington: No. I don't recall. I'm not saying I didn't, but I don't recall.

Q: Well, let's move onto adulthood. What do you observe in the way of leadership in the city at large? Was there a particular group, a particular offices or anything? What about the leadership of the city?

Washington: Politically?

Q: For one thing.

Washington: For one thing. My early years. My mother and father were Republican district leaders.

Q: Yes.

Washington: And our house was used as a headquarter for meeting. Our basement, we had a finished basement. So that many of the meetings and many of the politicians would come and go, especially during the elections, various elections whether they were city or county or statewide. And at an early age I worked at the polls. Checking off people, talking to people, and giving back.



We'd get what five dollars for those days. And I enjoyed that. But also my father said it was important to have knowledge of. Not to participate, but just to have knowledge of the political scene in the City of Newark. Earl Harris was very popular then, And he was a Republican initially. And Bill Stubbs, William Stubbs, was very active on the Republican ticket. As a result of my parents participation in politics, we were able to get a lot of recreation for the kids in the community after that. The PAL, we used our garage as a headquarters to store equipment for the children. Like basketballs and other.

Q: For their activities.

Washington: For their activities. And my mother because she was a parole officer was able to get a lot of items. For instance, she had to register as the person for the cap for the fire hydrants so you could turn the sprinklers on. So certain times of the day we would have the fire hose on.

Q: That was an important.

Washington: Yeah. But we were able to have the PAL program and block off the street. The street was blocked off, Triton Terrace, Triton Place. They would block it off maybe from twelve to one. It was kind of understood. People would not even travel, you know, unless there was an emergency. But it was unwritten. But we were able to do a lot of things. Maybe it's because the parents cooperated.

Q: Very important.

Washington: You know, whether they were active or just supportive, we were able to live in an environment that was safe. And we felt safe. Even if we left Peabody and went to Broadway or took the bus downtown which was five cents or seven cents, we didn't have no problems. I don't recall any major problems in terms of, I'm not saying that none existed because we know they did, that I experienced. I do recall the NAACP picketing Hanes at some point in terms of integration of

the sales people.

Q: Probably.

Washington: But for all, I mean, the education was the best. And Newark was ranked third in the United States. The salaries were very high for instructors at that time, given the range.

Q: Considering the country.

Washington: Country. The high school instructors were paid more towards degrees, higher degrees, received more income. But the instruction, you couldn't beat it. You had dedicated, committed instructors. Of course, we didn't know their problems. All we knew that we were getting a good education.

Q: That surely was important.

Washington: That was important. So when we applied for colleges, we had no problem, I don't think. Those of us who wanted to go to college always went. And, of course, it's sad when some students weren't able to go because parents had other plans for them or could not afford to send them. And many of them found a way to go on their own.

Q: Now you have touched on, we were talking about civic affairs and we got into the political. What about blacks in business? What businesses were you conscious of?

Washington: All right. Let me just take Peabody Place. We had the blacks who had a cleaner at the end of Peabody and Delafield. We had the Brantleys who had a beauty shop next door. My father had Valco Products. Mr. Johnson had a shoe repair shop. This was all on Peabody.

Q: These are all people in the neighborhood who had businesses.



Washington: In the neighborhood who had businesses. Right there in the neighborhood. Throughout the city, I think that the beauty culture was a big part of it. Mrs. Scott.

Q: I can believe that.

Washington: Mrs. Scott.

Q: Right. Who owned.

Washington: Scott's manor, Scott's.

Q: Scott's house that's being established as the Afro-American Culture Center.

Washington: Was the godmother of my brother.

Q: Is that true?

Washington: And she owned, oh, maybe five beauty shops. She had a beauty culture, cosmetology school. And she certainly was a lady to be reckoned with in this city. Although, you know, she had a number of marriages and other.

Q: But her achievements stand.

Washington: Her achievements stand.

Q: She had to be respected.

Washington: You had to respect her. And she earned your respect.

Q: Yes. Indeed.

Washington: Very good friend of my mother's. And she always paid, you know, did a lot of activities together.

Q: So you had occasion to know Madam Scott?

Washington: Oh, I knew Madam Scott very well. And I was very pleased to know her. She was always very nice to us. And but you knew that she was a lady of means. She had done well for herself. And she had a right to be proud. You know. And I kind of looked up at her. Of course, I looked up at my mother too. I held my mother in the highest esteem. So did my brother and sister. And then, of course, she had another brother Dennis. So that's all documented. This is our history family. But you had a big community of active people involved in beauty. You had Donald Stokes on High Street who had a big establishment for hair.

Q: Beauty culture.

Washington: Beauty culture as well. You had Scott. My father wasn't as big as they were, but he was a part of the group. And Molgro I think her name was on.

Q: There was a May Molgro.

Washington: Yeah. She was very active. And these were kind of the leaders at that time. Your society people in terms of the beauty culture in the City of Newark was quite big, quite big. And we had many activities. Of course, you had the college women. I think they called college, university women organization.

Q: Yes. Yes.



Washington: They gave me a scholarship to attend Fisk.

Q: And their numbers were smaller then.

Washington: And then you had the Shriners and you had the Eastern Star. My parents were part of that. And.

Q: What are you showing me now?

Washington: Eastern Star and Shriners. And that time you had balls.

Q: Who are these people?

Washington: My parents.

Q: And that picture was made in 1960.

Washington: They also went to a lot of, there were a lot of social affairs. Your black society, quote in Newark, was very, very active. My parents were always going to social affairs. And they were always dressing in gowns and tuxedos. That was what you wore. And most of the occasions you did not buy a ticket, you got a bid. For instance, if your club was having an affair, you didn't sell tickets. You would buy them yourself and give them to your friends. So you gave out bids. So people always calling.

Q: For bids.

Washington: Yeah, for bids. My aunt and uncle, my parents. And this was at one affair. Of course, the Terrace Ballroom was one of the main spotlights in the city. You had Wideaway Hall.

Q: These people are in the Terrace Ballroom?

Washington: Yes.

Q: Can you tell us some of them are? Who are the people in your picture there?

Washington: That's my aunt Nora Johnson and her husband, Mr. Gilbert Johnson, and this is my cousin Will and his wife Doreen.

Q: What's their last name?

Washington: Williams. And then my mother and father, Mr. and Mrs. John H. Auston. And these were friends of these at the affair. But you had tables. You know, you'd bring big platters of food. And my brother John and my sister Elsa, we would enjoy, we would be glad when they went to the social affairs because when the next morning we woke up there were goodies left for us. And that was done on purpose so that we wouldn't wake them up. And I enjoyed that. And then we had my brother, baby brother was born. He was a late child. He was born in 1955. And that was Kenneth.

Q: He's more than ten years behind you.

Washington: Oh yes. Late child. That was when she was a parole officer.

Q: Well, you have certainly protected your photographs in that book.

Washington: Oh yeah. In fact all my sisters and brothers all have a set. We also had Christmas cards made every year when we were growing up. So that many people grew up with me.

Q: I see a group here. Can you tell me what occasion this was?



Washington: Parole officers. These were many of co-workers. Unfortunately I don't know, you know, all their names.

Q: We'd be glad to hear anyone you can identify there for the record. Your mother in there?

Washington: Yes. My mother's here in the back, right here. Gentleman is Montclair Route, his son teaches in Newark. I'm very sorry. Their case load was unbelievable.

Q: Is that true?

Washington: Case load for parole officers. Over a hundred people at a time. And I got, well, we were blessed that we met many of the parolees. My mother said that she had worked with the mothers and the daughter, but she told me she wasn't going to be around for the third generation. If she could save one person.

Q: To get into a constructive life.

Washington: Right. Many of these, my mother was very ahead of her time. Many of the proposals that were made by her to correct the system, I guess are going into effect now. You don't send this person after they've served time, you don't send them back to the same environment. John Smith is waiting for him right at the bus stop or the train to take him back into the same activities that you just sent him to jail for. Drugs. You send that person, you relocate them to relatives away from the environment.

Q: To a different scene.

Washington: That's right. That's right. I wanted to show you the. There are a lot of pictures taken of us Dr. Flagg.

Q: Perhaps someday these will be available for the archives.

Washington: These are the, my mother started out with the Christmas cards with me. And every one received a copy. And as we, more children were added, we were added to the Christmas card. So that some families, here and outside the United States have a complete collection of all our pictures.

Q: I see. The children in your family.

Washington: You see. One, two, they're here, and then as we move along, there are more. And this is one of my favorite pictures of my brother. These are birthday parties we had. We had big birthday parties. We were very fortunate children. We were first children in the neighborhood with a television set.

Q: I can imagine. I can remember when radios were few.

Washington: Yes. I remember listening to the Fat Man and the Green Lantern on radio. Every year we sent our Christmas cards. Every year, without failure. We were talking about, and I know we have a way of getting away. But you had a big, the social climate in the City of Newark, was quite interesting. You had your own black society so to speak. Integrated, yes, but the.

Q: Integrated how?

Washington: Integrated in terms of many of the work places. And I know there was a lot of racism at work, in the work environment. But the black society in Newark, well, then it was black society. They were very active. They were active in their own clubs.

Q: Doing what?



Washington: Working with people. We didn't have that many agencies. You had the Salvation Army. But I recall the group of people just getting together to help people. Pulling together clothes and food to help the needy. They didn't have to belong to an organization. They just did what they had to do.

Q: But who were the people who are doing this?

Washington: In the neighborhoods. I don't know how to explain it, but it was just like where there was a need, someone would take up the cause to help their fellow. Not only the churches. The churches were there.

Q: Were they churches, clubs? Were the clubs doing things like that?

Washington: Clubs and churches. And, you know, just busy, always busy. It was a good time. I'm not. It was a good time because people helped other people. As they do today. I think people are being helped very well today. But my memories of my childhood are so positive. Because we had time to be children. I started working when I was fourteen in Garden State Finishing Company.

Q: With working papers?

Washington: With working papers down the East Ward, I worked in a sweat box. With Lynn Henry, Ronnie Henry's daughter.

Q: Doing what?

Washington: Well, I was working with putting freon in a box, in a book, and working on elections materials.

END SIDE TWO, TAPE ONE; BEGIN SIDE ONE, TAPE TWO

Q: We'd just been talking about your work experiences, Mrs. Washington, leading to your adult career. Now we want to hear about your professional career. So if you'll tell us how it began and where and all of your experience in the Newark School professional staff.

Washington: Well, I guess I have to return to Fisk University. I had the pleasure. I was blessed. When I met all these noted, black authors, artists. And I was fortunate to have Mr. Curry and Donald Franklin and my mother graduated from Fisk together so I saw a lot of him. And then I was taught by Aaron Douglas.

Q: Wonderful.

Washington: Father of the black arts, the whole Renaissance period. I was blessed in that Aaron Douglas was my instructor for four years and I worked for him for two of those four years.

Q: How so?

Washington: As a proctor. They call them proctors. I did the grading of the tests. I was taking, I took attendance for him, for his classes. All of this, well, fortunately, my classes were, there was no conflict with my courses then.

Q: That sounds good.

Washington: So I was able to do that. And work for the education department. I did their research with regard to any new and innovative trainings in education. I was able to get. It was my responsibility to gather all the material. I worked for Miss Green in the education department. I worked for the other art instructor, [?]. I worked for three people. I did have a scholarship. I earned the scholarship. This was extra money, pocket money. My mother was blind at the time,



and I knew that whatever funds that I would need.

Q: You say your mother was what?

Washington: Blind. Her cataracts.

Q: Oh.

Washington: Yes. So, therefore, I knew that I needed additional income. You know, not for schooling, just for personal needs. And so by working I was able to do that. And I had National Defense loan which I didn't have to pay until I completed my education. Plus a scholarship. So, you know, it worked out fine. There was no problem. And but working with Aaron Douglas was a pleasure. What a gentleman. What a scholar. Plus it was one on one just like our discussion. In depth, very critical. He knew you could do better. And he wasn't going to accept less. Taught me a lot in terms of who I was as an artist, where I needed to go, and those memories of working for him and being taught by him, I don't know how to describe it. You cannot put a cost, you cannot put a price tag on the education I received. It was education not only of what he required of me in terms of studying and his expectations of me, but he taught me from the heart. Because I was a part of what he called the future. And he would constantly question me about what do you want to do, where do you want to go. He knew I wanted to go into education. He said whatever you do, make sure that you leave a contribution with our children and with the future that you're gonna leave. And I think I've done that. But what a gentleman. I mean, where, I could never have been taught by a one on one private, that was private instruction. Private instruction. There were two other art people Melanie and a young lady from South Jersey, Sherry.

Q: It was certainly through you he was reaching further into the future.

Washington: He was reaching. He was reaching. And so was Miss Green. Miss Green was a lady of wealth who taught at Fisk, taught education. And I worked for her in terms of doing the



research as I explained. And she wore her shawl, she wore her little broach. But she told me you're never absent on a Monday because you haven't gotten over the weekend, and you're never absent on a Friday because you're getting ready for the weekend. And she taught us so much in terms of what it requires, what is needed by you to be an educator. The trinity. Dedicated. You never start blarney, you never say you know it all. Because you don't. There is always somebody smarter than you. She not only taught from the book, but she taught from life experience.

Q: I see. Very important.

Washington: Very important. Very important. So from Fisk, I returned to Newark and there were no, at the time, they did not have a position in art. But what they did, they hired me as a long term sub, Miss Loreday, and the person was out on sabbatical because they had sabbaticals then in education. And I started my teaching career at Camden Street School. And then after two years, after I took the test, I got the regular position because people had retired. And then I stayed at Camden until they built the new school, and I was a part of that transition. And I taught at the Camden for six, seven years, and then I went to Barringer. There was a calling to come to Barringer. I had taken, during that, I think it's eight years teaching, nine years. Interviewed for supervisor of art education. In fact, your husband was on the panel.

Q: Is that true?

Washington: Yes, he was. He had me draw his profile. They felt, Gladys Francis. Wait a minute, your husband's on the committee. Gladys Francis is on the committee. Committee of about four or five people. George Kerrigan was on the committee. They felt that I didn't have high school experience. Not that I would not do well, but they felt that I needed the high school experience. And, oh, Pat Wistamen was on the committee. And I can recall after taking the interview, Atlantic City, Pat Wistamen stopped me in Convention Hall, and asked me would I like to teach at Barringer. I didn't know at the time why he wanted me to teach at Barringer. Of course, I found out later. They wanted me to have high school experience. So, of course, I was



delighted and excited and so I started teaching at Barringer. Taught there for three years. In the meantime, I had to earn my master's degree. I was the first African-American to complete the fine arts degree in Montclair State when they instituted the program. And I went to school, what three nights a week and full time in the summer, so I finished in two years. And took the oral exam. And they just told me to wait. Oh, I know. Stanley Taylor came to Newark, and all appointments were on hold. So instead of me getting the appointment in 73, I received the appointment in 74 as supervisor of arts. All appointments were held up.

Q: That was sort of to give the new superintendent an opportunity.

Washington: Right. Right. And so when he found out it was me, he said, oh, if I'd known it was you I would have pushed it through. We were next door neighbors. And, well, I kept away from him.

Q: Yes.

Washington: You know. That's my neighbor. That's the only thing. But then started at Barringer as supervisor of arts. Between the supervisor and the directorship, that's twenty-five years as an administrator. And then with my teaching experience, it's like a total of thirty-five years. I feel very good. I feel very good about what I attempted to do. I tried to give the students more than I had through recognition of their talents. Not only through awards, but exposure to exhibitions. That's more important.

Q: Tell us about some of the exhibitions and some of the other exposures, alliances, opportunities that you provided or brought.

Washington: Well, through the department, Dr. Atchison was the director initially for fifteen years. And certainly I cannot say that she did not make her contribution. Many of the, I used to tell Paul, who was my assistant, I've taken it this far, it's up to you to take it to another level. So

that was what I attempted to do. Dr. Atchison had taken it to one level.

Q: And you kept.

Washington: I attempted to take everything to another level.

Q: All right. We want to hear about some of those.

Washington: Through the Newark Teen Art.

Q: What was that?

Washington: Oh what was that? You were friends with it. But the Newark Teen Art was a community based collaborative of the Newark Public School District on behalf of the talented art students.

Q: And what outside?

Washington: Well, I'm getting ready to mention the organizations. The Prudential was very much involved in providing the space needed for exhibitions in their lobby on Broad Street in Newark, as well as providing and hosting the award ceremony and dinners that accommodated the Newark Teen Art Exhibition, Inc. Then we had Teen Art festivals sponsored by the Junior League. We had the recycling poster contest. Police poster contest. Fire poster contest. National Conference of Christians and Jews. Teen health poster contests. All of these contests were sponsored by reputable agencies, whether it was through a hospital, through our police department, fire department, recycling department, agencies for the City of Newark. Junior League sponsored the Teen Art Festival. There were just so many that after a while, you know, you had to, I had to set up a system where everyone was requested to notify me by the beginning of September whether or not they were going to participate as a sponsor of their activity. So that we could send out a listing



each year.

Q: I see. What were some of the places where the students work would be exhibited?

Washington: All right. Prudential, Newark Museum which hosted us for thirty years. Mutual Benefit Life Insurance Company, PSE&G, Panasonic out in Secaucus in what became the Windows of the World, that's the name I gave it, and that's the name they still use. City Hall. State Department of Education in Trenton.

Q: And what would you say these exposures did for the students?

Washington: Although many of the awards were, I always tried to put a cash, not always, many times there were cash values in recognition for our children. More importantly, it was important for them to exhibit their talents, their creative, innate talents. Whether they were, some students are naturally gifted, but some students are talented if they have the right instruction. I think that what it has done for our students. We were not trying to make all of them artists, but an appreciation of the arts, for the arts, and also to make them in the future students or people, adults, that will have such an appreciation for the arts that they will instill in their children the necessary venues for their children to appreciate the arts. They become our future audience. If we don't mold them now, no matter if they like rock and roll, if they like jazz, if they like Aztec art, realistic art, they have to appreciate something. We have to present it to them. And let them make the decision. There are some decisions they have to make of what they like and don't like. Like we did.

Q: It's enrichment.

Washington: It's enrichment.

Q: Must be provided.

Washington: Must be provided.

Q: While they're young.

Washington: While they're young so they can make those decisions. Very important.

Q: Well, I think you certainly have contributed a great deal to the living of our students, and, therefore, I'm sure, to the future of our city.

Washington: I hope so. I've, although I'm retired, and retired June, officially June, 1998, I'm still active in the Newark community. I serve on the New Jersey Pack Arts Education Council which is headed by Phillip Stone. I'm active with the Newark, I'm one of the more active with the Newark Arts Council. The Museum, I've become more involved there. I'm also active with the Regional Plan Administration. There are a lot of arts. The arts in Newark, Newark has always been jazz, but the fine arts, the visual arts, have never gotten the real support that it deserves. Talking about traditional artists. So I'm hoping to become a part of that and help build on that aspect. We have a lot of artists that have moved to Newark and purchased lofts behind City Hall and invested their lives into what they see as a potential for Newark becoming like Hoboken. You know, with the arts. And Montclair. Jersey City has a big art community as well. And there's no reason why Newark is not number one. We have more artists here than they do.

Q: I can recall a time when there were young professional artists on Central Avenue. I particularly recall 15 Central Avenue as having been a center. Cause artists were quartered there. And you could go there and see them and hear them and see some of their works displayed.

Washington: I do know. I took a tour about two and a half years ago of the lofts. Tour with the mayor and Lance Bateman who was in charge of the, supervisor of cultural affairs at the time. And we toured the areas for not only the visual artists but the performing artists. And the lofts and the places that they had set. The Newark Arts Council, as well as the Arts Education Committee



for New Jersey Pack, have been holding various meetings to talk about the future of the arts in Newark.

Q: Is there a growing colony?

Washington: There is a growing colony. Right now we only have two major galleries. City Without Walls and Al Jirod. In a city this size, you have the Newark museum, of course. I think at one time we had more galleries than that. But we also had arts stores. You know how I mean art stores, merchandise to purchase. And when I want to purchase some art merchandise, I have to go to Woodbridge.

Q: Instead of right on Washington Street.

Washington: Right on Washington Street. The school system our children will survive. But we have to provide more venues for them. Organizations have to increase their support of our school system. And I'm talking about financial as well as hands on, or. They've got to. They're always complaining and many of them like the Prudential Foundation certainly has been a big contributor. The Victoria Foundation, Dodge Foundation. I'm talking about. I've gone around and talked to little stores. I said you realize the impact you could have on your neighborhood schools. I said you receive thousands of dollars from these kids every year. There's no reason why you can't donate five hundred dollars contribution to the school. Whether it's audio equipment or a natural donation for a scholarship. There's no reason. I said, what does it cost you to donate it. You write it off as taxes. You know, it's like knocking at doors.

Q: Well, I hope they hear your message.

Washington: Well, I think some of them are. Some of them will never hear the message. But Newark is only going to go up. The changes that are taking place now, slow as they are, have all been on the drawing board, on someone's drawing board for years. Now the opportunity had lent

itself to come off that board and let's get it going. Let's get it going. All right.

Q: That sounds good.

Washington: And that's just what is going to happen. Newark is going to be once again the Mecca for cultural endeavors. And now they're trying to get the sports.

Q: So there seems to be a consciousness among the general population that these things are a part of our lives.

Washington: It took a quarter of a century for us to come alive again. Twenty-five years.

Q: All right. Now I'm going to change a little bit., I'm going to ask you to talk about changes and hopes. What changes have you seen in the City? And you can talk about physically, you can talk about government and management, you can talk about racial emphasis or racial changes. The changes that you have seen and the things that you hope for for the city at large and perhaps a special emphasis upon Afro-Americans.

Washington: There are changes that I've seen. I'd like to deal with the housing first.

Q: Go right ahead.

Washington: I think that growing up in Newark, people lived in houses for the most part. They didn't have the high rises that were built. And all they did for the most part was to breed crime, incest and ruin many families. Thank goodness those tall buildings have been imploded and replaced with livable units where people can take pride. Newark growing up was a very beautiful city. We never even locked our door until after the rioting. Everyone's door was always open. We always felt like we didn't need to lock the doors. Many occasions we would wake up as a family and relatives from North Carolina were standing there.



Q: That sounds amazing.

Washington: Right. But when I look at Newark and I look at the highways that have come through the city like 78. You have 24 has touched on it briefly. Newark looks better. The people I think, ninety percent of the people want to live in a safe environment. You always, unfortunately, still have a negative group. Schemers, scanners, which you're always gonna have. But as I drive around the city from the East Ward to the South Ward to the West Ward to the Central Ward to the North Ward, without a doubt, Newark looks better. The churches, I'd like to see more churches as opposed to store fronts, but I understand the economics. You can find God has made provisions for us to have our blessings in our homes if we want to. We don't need to go a church. That's not necessary. Jesus preached in the open air. No one said we had to have a closed environment. A building. Okay. I'd like to see just like when you go down south, where we have a bar on every corner, they have a church on every corner. I'd like to see more churches. I'd like to see more families. And I'm not a church goer every Sunday. But I'd like to see more involvement of the church in our community in a positive way. Not always reacting. But being there beforehand. The schools in the City of Newark have undergone tremendous changes throughout the decades. I see when I retired, I've listed how many superintendents and assistant superintendents. I hope as we go into this new millennium that we can find continuity and stability. When we had a superintendent for many years, we had Dr. Kennelly, Edward Kennelly, we had Frank Titus. Even with the problems that might have existed, because there was continuity in leadership, there was continuity with the immediate educational leaders, there was continuity in the classroom, and with the administrators. Newark got high test scores. High reading scores. People couldn't even get into Newark to teach. And I think you remember that.

Q: Indeed I do.

Washington: And you remember the racial, and I'm gonna bring it up. I did a case study on your case.



Q: You did?

Washington: Oh yes I did. In grad school. With you and Clinton Hogard was it?

Q: Phillip Hogard.

Washington: Phillip Hogard. And I looked at the administrators who, quote when I was a supervisor called themselves liberals, who were fighting you at that time. Of course, you became the first black principal in the City of Newark. And Dr. E. M. Flagg. And then you and your husband were assistant superintendents. You were assistant superintendent for elementary and he was for secondary. And then he left for Montclair.

Q: At the secondary level, he was the director of secondary education.

Washington: Director. Okay. But look at the contribution you made to us, and then when I became supervisor, you took me under your wing, and guided me accordingly. And I'll never forget that.

Q: Well, you know, I saw something there.

Washington: You saw something there. You saw a little rebel too. I had a little rebel in me. But we need continuity. We need some stability in this city. Our children and our teachers, they need to know that every morning when they go to the school building, the same principal is going to be there, the same leadership is downtown, whether you like them or not. But right now, you don't know. Every day you go, you hear everyone complaining. The first time I heard so many people who always had positive attitudes, even during the worst of times, they'd say it's going to get better. I don't hear that. Of course, we've always had a natural turnover in leadership. And that's accepted. A certain percentage of people go out each year. But with the exodus of the administrators in January, 1998, and the anticipated exodus of the instructional staff, the ones who



really make the difference, the teachers in the classroom anticipated in June, I think, seven hundred people. This system is going to have to regroup. And then with the superintendent leaving and going to Atlanta.

Q: It will be almost be completely new, won't it?

Washington: That is correct. That is correct. Fifty percent, over fifty percent of the administrators in the city are new. I've only been out a year, and if I go downtown, I won't know anybody. That's how quickly things have changed. But if you're gonna lose seven or eight hundred teachers at one time in this city --

Q: That's amazing.

Washington: And throughout the United States.

END SIDE ONE, TAPE TWO; BEGIN SIDE TWO, TAPE TWO

Q: You were talking about the magnitude of the changes in the Newark School System in both administration, central administration, and classrooms. Would you continue?

Washington: Yes. This coming June, 1999, Newark School System will lose approximately seven hundred teachers. Teachers are gonna retire. Here we have natural turnover, maybe a hundred each year. Now you're talking about seven hundred. And according to reports that I've heard on educational programs, the United States is gonna lose over one million teachers. Right now, they're hiring a lot of substitute teachers who have no idea of what they're teaching because they don't have the background. Many states have been recruiting teachers. Boston, I believe, went to Princeton to recruit instructors. They're gonna give them an incentive of twenty thousand dollars.

Q: Did you see what's happening in New York?

Washington: Yes. Yes. We're in trouble. Our children are in trouble. We cannot afford to continue to have administrative, major administrative changes. It has been proven whenever there's continuity, the scores go up. The stability in the neighborhoods. Our children move around too much, and it's not their fault. It's not their fault. But you need at least some stability with the leadership, and hopefully that will come about. I do anticipate the school system in Newark once again being number one in the state, but it's gonna take a long time. Hopefully, I'll be around to see it. I don't even know at this point.

Q: In the times that you remember when test scores were good, nobody was concentrating on the tests all of the time. The results came because the education was going forward without concentrating on tests.

Washington: You had good teachers. As Gladys Francis used to say, the reason kids can't read is teachers don't know how to teach it. Same with math. Our teachers in the in service programs bring most. But we didn't have all these specialized programs. If you'll notice the decline in reading and math, they brought in every kind of program under the sun. All these expensive programs where they could have taken that same amount of, you know, taken that money and placed it into materials to have the basic teaching done. I just think that so much money has been wasted in education. Someone comes up with a bright idea, they know somebody, and their program will not benefit our children in the long run. It benefits the person who's bringing it into the system.

Q: Well, forward we have to go.

Washington: As far as businesses are concerned, you will see the increase in businesses in Newark only because the sports complex will bring in more business. Right now we don't have a major department store. If I want to go shopping, I have to go to Livingston, Short Hills, Woodbridge, Willowbrook. It does not make sense.



Q: I don't like that.

Washington: I'm living in the largest city in the state, and yet I can't even shop in the city. I never heard of such a. I shop by TV. The government. The government is gonna have to pay more attention to the citizens of this city. I don't think enough attention is being given to them. There are too many personal agendas. Sometimes you need to put those aside, and get about the business of what's best for the City of Newark.

Q: I agree with you.

Washington: Put your emphasis and focus in the right place. Many of our politicians have been around long enough that whatever they wanted for their constituents I'm sure they've gotten. Now, what's best for the city. And stop sitting up there posturing and being important. I'm not interested in that. What are you gonna do for the citizens? Not just your ward, not just your street. But what is in the best interest of this city. And I do believe in the new millennium you're gonna see a lot of changes with the governmental officials, city officials. We've already seen some of the changes with the council. And I think you're gonna see a few changes. Some changes are positive, some are not. But that's always true. But I do think that businesses will move back to Newark. Once everything is in place that they want. We have New Jersey Transit, has their own building. I do believe Prudential, they're bringing employees back.

Q: So I read.

Washington: Right. So you're gonna see. Now that certain things that they wanted in place are in place, you'll see these businesses moving back. You won't be able to buy any property downtown. As you know, many of the merchants who have been there for years are being forced out because the rent increase. When you see that a city is going to go up, of course, then you're gonna increase the rent and force the small man out. So the changes are coming. And they're coming, some are coming fast and some are coming slow. But the changes are coming.

Q: And Newark is going to make it?

Washington: That is correct. Big time. Big time. We've already, we already have new restaurants, and with the gentleman who's doing the, within a year all downtown Newark will change by Hanes building. George Street will have a different appearance. Newark does not have a night life now, and that's one of the survivals of a city is to have an active evening community with safe environment, with a safe environment. So, therefore, the police force will be increased. You know. Property value will go straight up.

Q: It will be good to see.

Washington: It will. It will.

Q: You would say that Newark is on the move in the right direction, and we're gonna get there.

Washington: We're gonna get there. We're gonna get there as long as the individuals such as yourself stay in Newark. You can't keep moving.

Q: Well, that's been a concern of mine. So I haven't gone anywhere. And you are here.

Washington: And I'm here. We stayed in Newark. We made a choice. We made a choice to remain in the city. And many people, of course I'm sure they question you, I know they question me, why you staying there. I say why do you live where you live.

Q: Choice.

Washington: You have a choice. And I have a choice.

Q: Well, I thank you so very much, Mrs. Washington.



Washington: Thank you.

Q: And I trust that we will both see some of what we are hoping for, and that Newark will once again be the great city that it has been. This is C. Alma Flagg having interviewed Mrs. Franotie A. Washington on March 17th, 1999.

END OF INTERVIEW